

Report on Complaints Received by the Ombudsman's Office February 2021 - February 2022

March 31, 2022



CITY OF DETROIT

OMBUDSMAN

BRUCE SIMPSON, CITY OMBUDSMAN

"Improving Your Quality of Life On a Daily Basis"

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March 31, 2022

The Honorable Detroit City Council
City of Detroit
1340 CAYMC
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Ombudsman Budget Analysis FY 2022-2023

Dear Council Members:

I would like to say thank you to your Honorable Body for giving me the opportunity to address the service delivery concerns and complaints of our citizens. This is the sixth report that has been issued to your Honorable Body by this Ombudsman Office. This year we have processed 4,438 complaints. Of the 4,438 complaints, the majority of them have come from the Building Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) and the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA). Combined, they account for 68% of all complaints received.

The recommendations that I have provided to you in this report address revenue generation and public safety. With these recommendations and analysis of the budget we attempt to speak to the concerns of the masses throughout the City.

I submit this report on behalf of our residents, property owners, business owners and all persons who have contacted the Ombudsman Office during the time period of February, 2021 through February, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Simpson
City Ombudsman

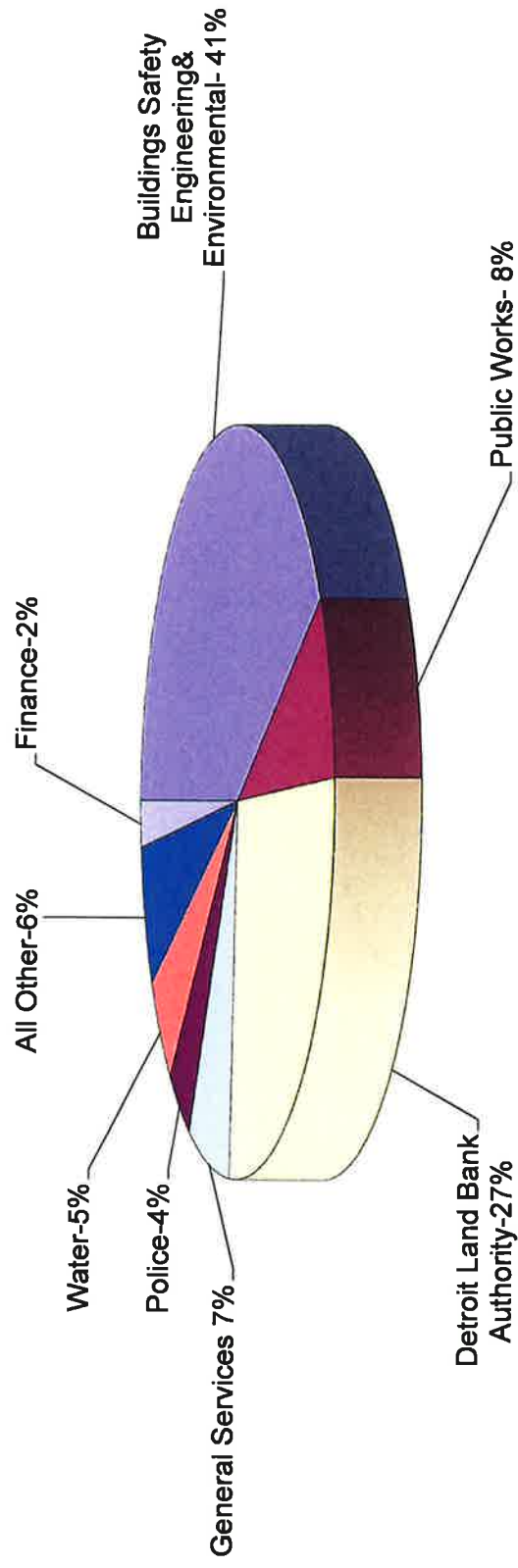
“Improving Your Quality of Life On a Daily Basis”

SECTION 1

Complaints by Department
February 1, 2021 - February 1, 2022

Department	Complaints	Percentage
BSEED	1806	41%
Elections	1	0.02%
Finance	109	2.46%
Fire	4	0.09%
General Services	331	7.46%
Health	16	0.36%
Human Resources	3	0.07%
Law	1	0.02%
Municipal Parking	6	0.14%
Non Departmental & Non Jurisdictional	79	1.78%
P&DD	1	0.02%
Police	186	4.19%
PLD	35	0.79%
Public Works	352	7.93%
Recreation	5	0.11%
DDOT (Transportation)	8	0.18%
DWSD (Water & Sewerage)	225	5.07%
DLBA	1212	27.31%
Other	58	1.31%
TOTAL	4,438	

Ombudsman Complaints by Department



“All Other” represents several departments with less than two percent of the total complaints and as a result they were combined for chart clarity purposes.



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Ombudsman Recommendations

- **Deed Requirement**
- **Property Tax Affidavit**
- **DPD Educational and home ownership opportunities**
- **Disabled Veteran Exemption**

Deed Requirement

The majority of states in our country have laws on the books that make it mandatory for a deed to be filed upon the transfer of ownership for a property. The State of Michigan does not. Why is this important? Uncertainty of ownership will continue to yield inaccurate records and harm our ability to collect money owed to the city. Code enforcement, which is essential for every municipality throughout Michigan becomes more difficult. It aids speculators and investors that refuse to take care of their property. As a result, we are forced to see this blight within our communities when we cannot identify the correct owner.

Property Transfer Affidavits (PTA's)

The General Property Tax Act (P.A. 206 of 1893) requires the filing of a property transfer affidavit with the Assessor's Office. Failure to file costs a penalty of merely \$200.00 for residential property, and \$1,000 for commercial/industrial property. A new buyer not filing their PTA puts the city at a serious disadvantage in several ways:

1. We are not functioning with accurate records of ownership. Every collection effort issued by the city will face an uphill battle, due to this inaccuracy.
2. If the taxes are never uncapped and the tax rolls are not adjusted to reflect the change of ownership, we are not in a position to capture the property taxes associated with the true taxable value of the structure.

Providing a mechanism with accountability, that strongly encourages a new owner to file a PTA will be a revenue generator and significantly increase the accuracy of our records. This is a loophole often taken advantage of by many investors and speculators. Clearly, the mandatory filing of a deed and PTA's work together for our benefit.

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DPD Education and Home Ownership

It has been reported that 100 officers have left the Detroit Police Department in 2021 and at least 19 officers in 2022. The Administration and City Council have approved a payment of \$2,000 to our officers and another \$1,000 to police assistants. This show of support is absolutely necessary and appreciated.

I believe that if we think outside of the box and get creative, we can find other incentives in addition to this payment. I am recommending an expansion of the Detroit Promise Program to include Detroit Police Officers. An expansion of this program would work in conjunction with the current educational program for Detroit Police Officers through Cleary University. Whether an officer participates in the Cleary University program or a school covered by the Detroit Promise, we should cover the costs after tuition reimbursement. Everyone benefits from a better educated police force.

We are also recommending the reimplementation of Project 14, which was first introduced under the Bing administration. A program that would afford officers an opportunity to receive a newly renovated Detroit Land Bank home. We know that residency requirements are no longer in place and changing that law would prove to be a difficult task. Other municipalities are benefiting from the talent we are losing.

Both measures would provide attractive incentives to those that may be considering joining the Detroit Police Department. Both measures would also improve our ability to retain those officers that may have considered leaving. If we are educating an officer over a period of time in order for them to obtain a degree, the chances of retention should be much higher. Providing a home adds to the tax base and is a selling point for realtors. This is something every community would get behind. There are many areas of our government that are able to function in a less than robust fashion, but public safety is not one of them. If we continue to lose officers, it will ultimately negatively affect the deliverance of all city services.

Disabled Veterans

Disabled veterans in the State of Michigan are one hundred percent exempt from property taxes. They are also some of our most vulnerable citizens. Right now, a disabled veteran has to file for this exemption every year with respective municipalities. If the veteran does not make it to the Board of Review on time, every year, they are stuck with the burden of addressing a tax bill that they do not owe. The Board of Review only meets three times a year in March, July and December.

The Veteran will not stop being a Veteran and they will not stop being disabled. Because of this we believe it is wrong to inconvenience and ask that citizen/veteran to file with us on an annual basis. This is why, we have recommended to the Assessor that we pursue a change to P.A. 206 in Lansing concerning our disabled veterans. Senate bill 846, introduced by Senator Sylvia Santana, if passed and signed by the Governor, will allow the Assessor to execute the exemption for that disabled veteran at any time of the year. After filing with their respective municipality, they would **not** be asked to refile on an annual basis. This change would directly affect over four hundred disabled veterans in our city and roughly twenty-thousand statewide.

SECTION 2

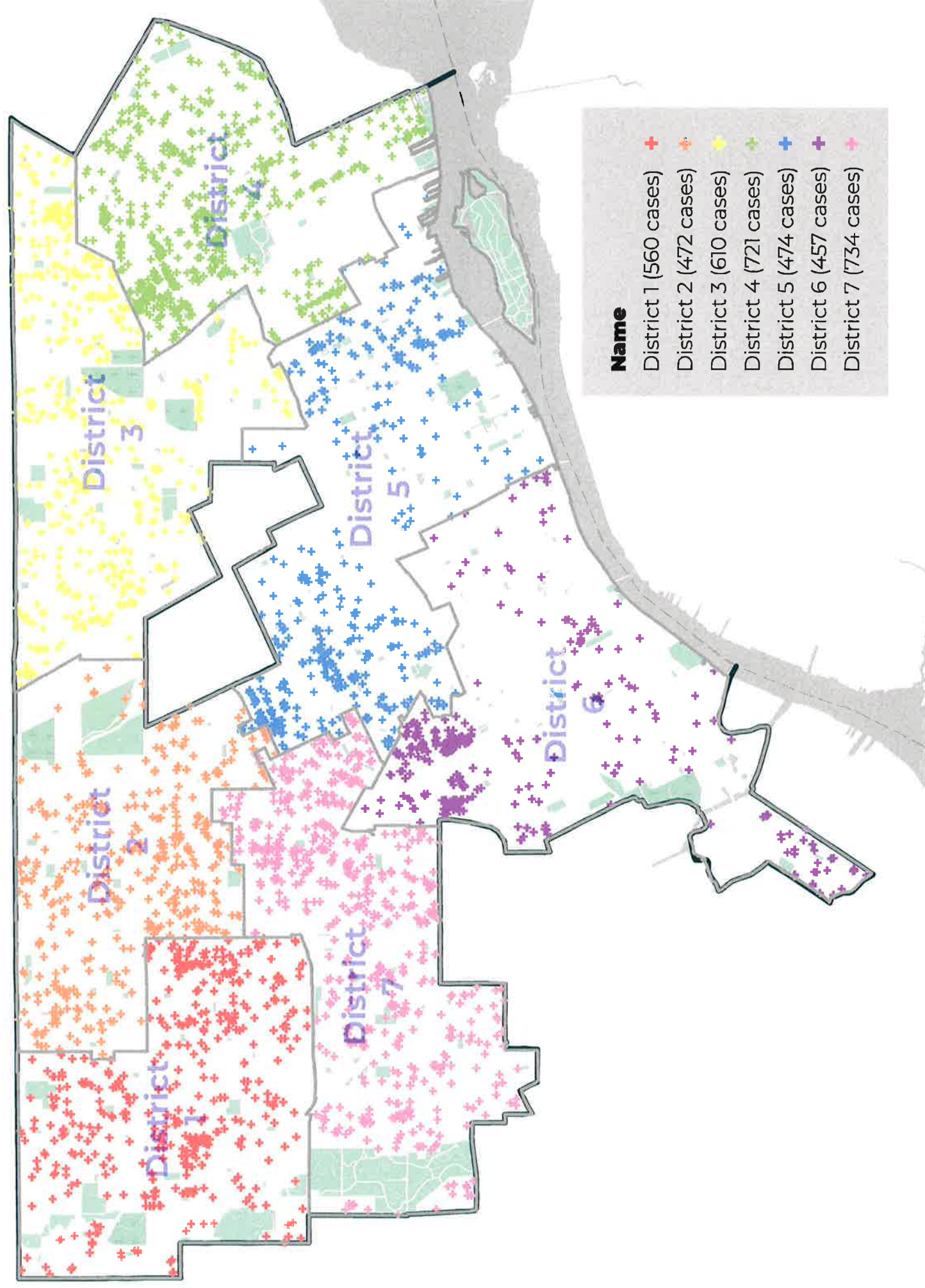
Complaints by District February 1, 2021- February 1, 2022

DISTRICT 1	746
DISTRICT 2	479
DISTRICT 3	1011
DISTRICT 4	346
DISTRICT 5	488
DISTRICT 6	699
DISTRICT 7	651

OTHER	18
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Total	4438
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Complaints by Council District



SECTION 3

Zip Codes	Number of Cases by Zip Code	Percentages
48201	13	0.29%
48202	59	1.33%
48203	118	2.66%
48204	278	6.26%
48205	417	9.40%
48206	169	3.81%
48207	63	1.42%
48208	35	0.79%
48209	54	1.22%
48210	189	4.26%
48211	25	0.56%
48212	118	2.66%
48213	254	5.72%
48214	154	3.47%
48215	122	2.75%
48216	19	0.43%
48217	50	1.13%
48219	237	5.34%
48221	167	3.76%
48223	151	3.40%
48224	191	4.30%
48226	91	2.05%
48227	351	7.91%
48228	287	6.47%
48233	1	0.02%
48234	239	5.39%
48235	200	4.51%
48236	10	0.23%
48238	351	7.91%
48239	22	0.50%
OTHER	3	0.07%
Total	4438	

District 6

48201

Midtown

Complaints Received:13
Percentage:0.29 %

Detroit

District 5

48202

Complaints Received:59
Percentage:1.33 %

District 2

48203

Complaints Received: 118
Percentage: 2.66%

District 6

Complaints Received: 278

Percentage: 6.27%

48204

District 6

Complaints Received: 278

Percentage: 6.27%

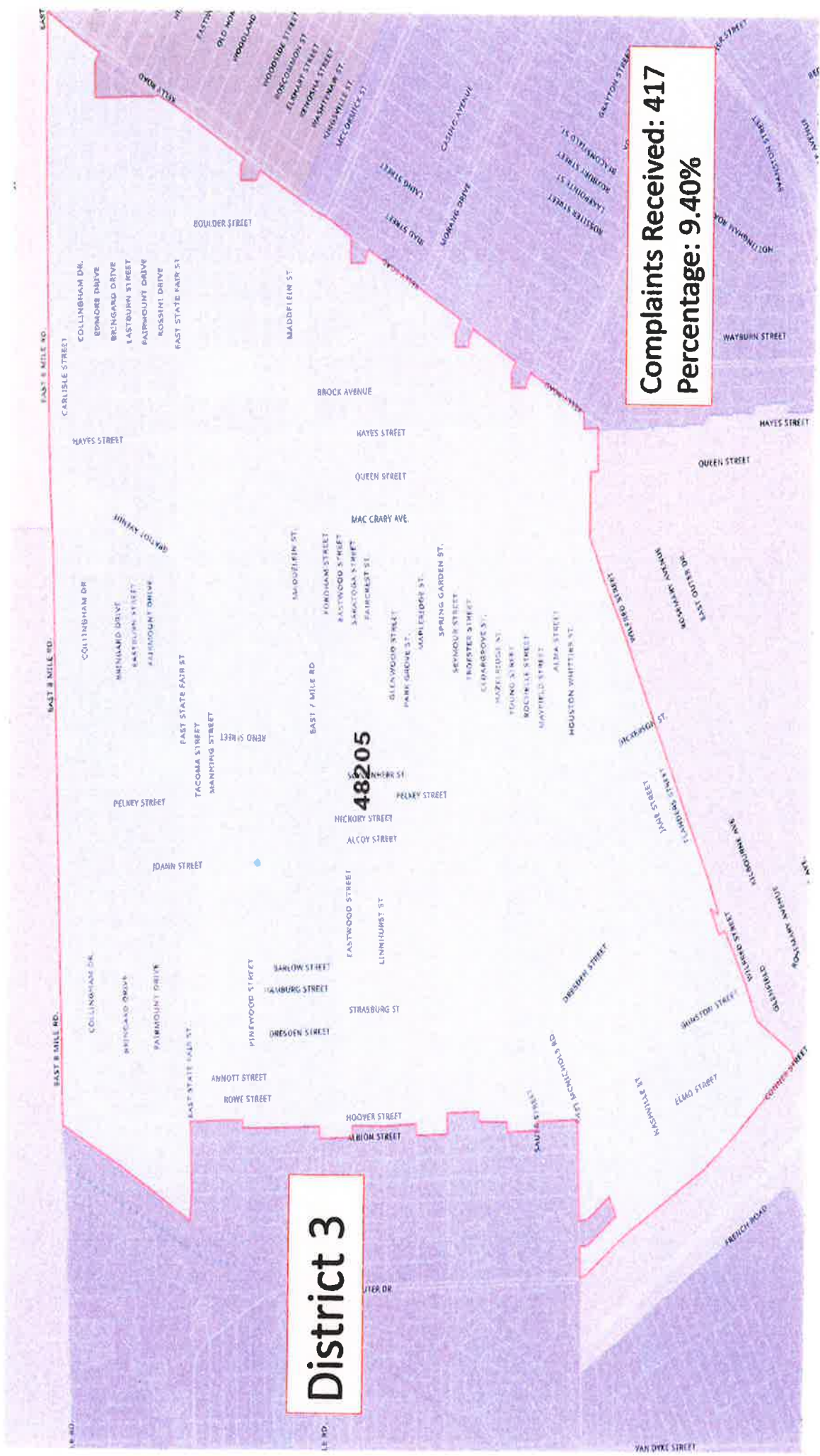
48204

District 6

Complaints Received: 278

Percentage: 6.27%

48204



District 5

48206

Complaints Received: 169
Percentage: 3.81%

District 5

Complaints Received: 63
Percentage: 1.42%

Complaints Received: 63
Percentage: 1.42%

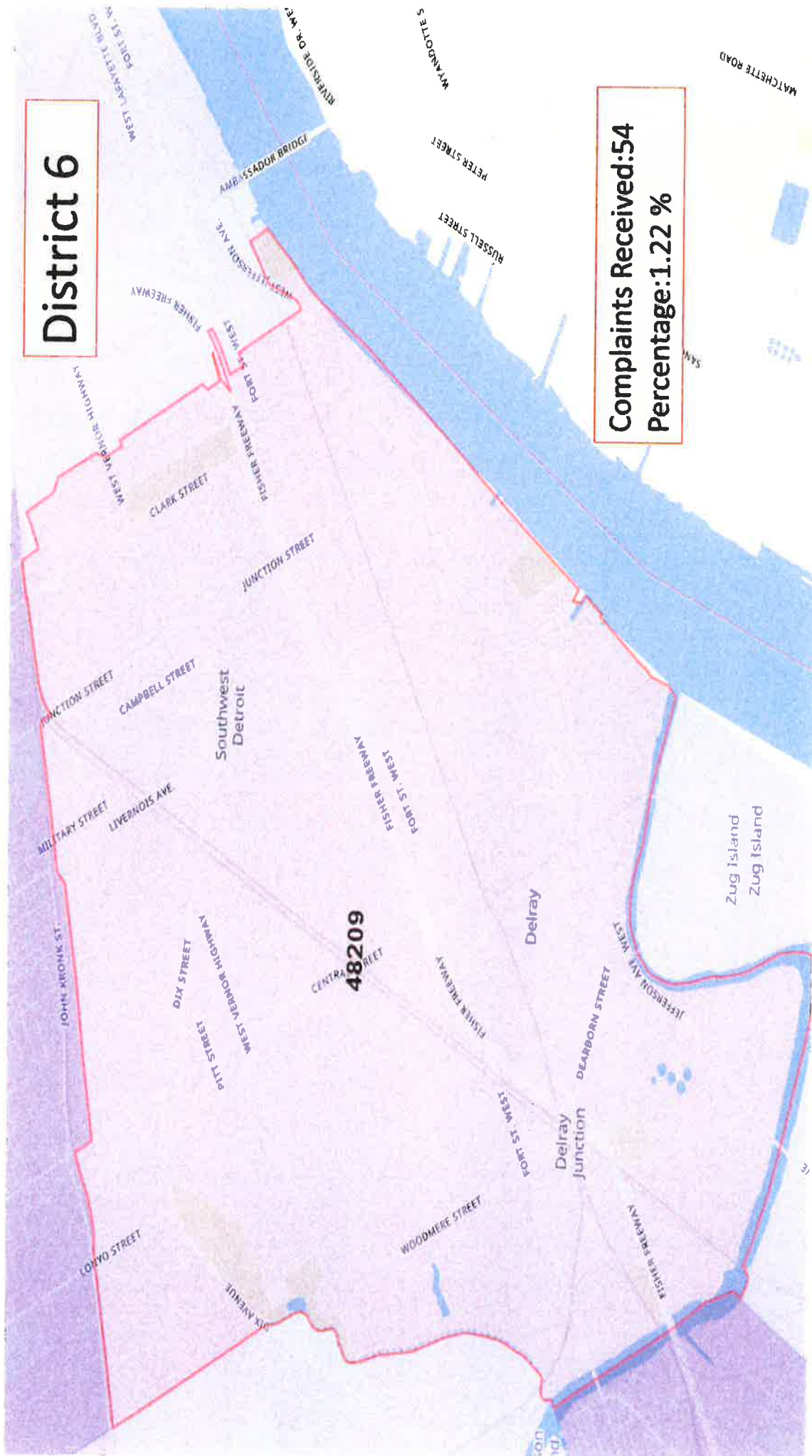
Complaints Received:35
Percentage:0.79 %

48208

District 5

District 6

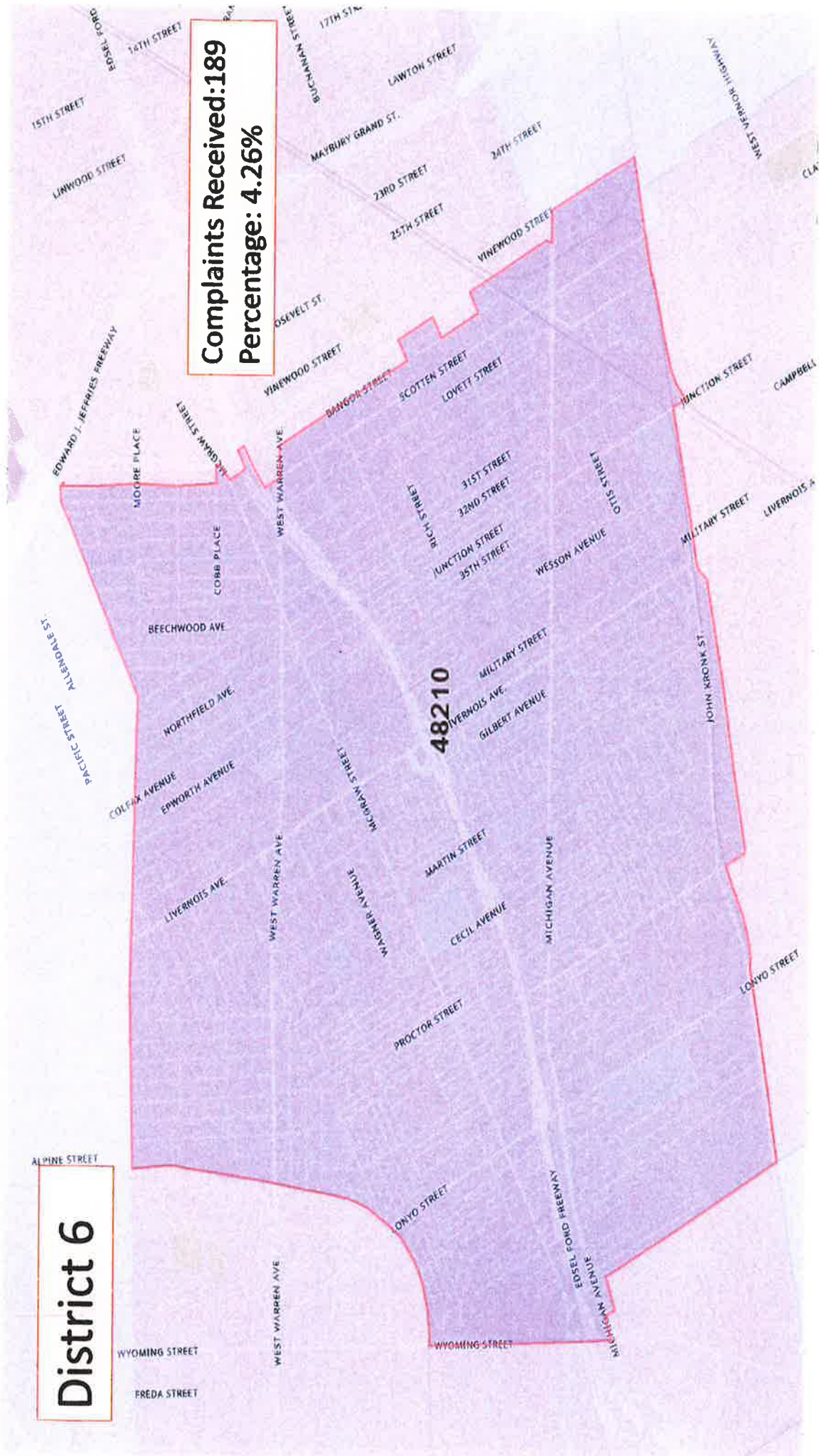
Complaints Received:54
Percentage:1.22 %



District 6

Complaints Received: 189
Percentage: 4.26%

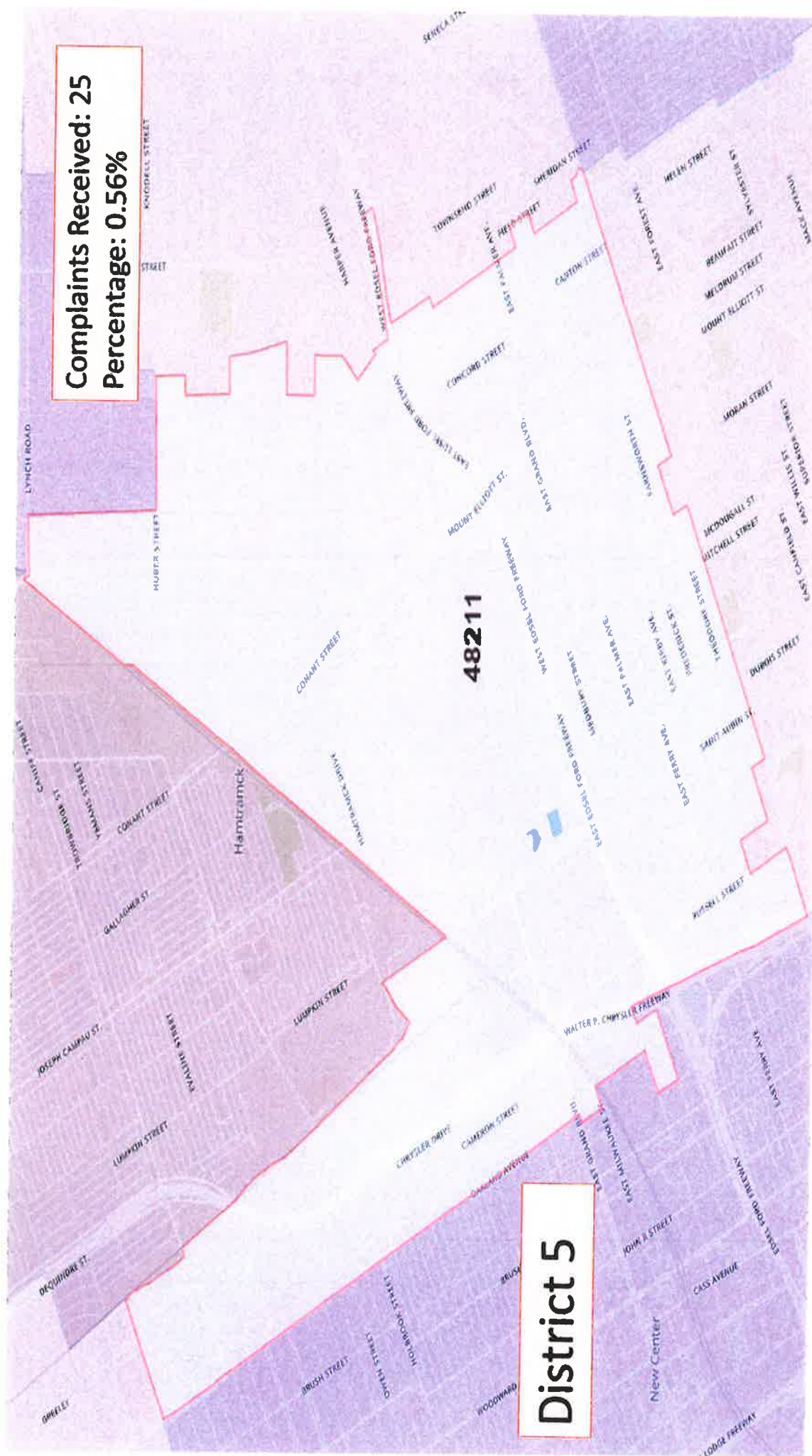
48210

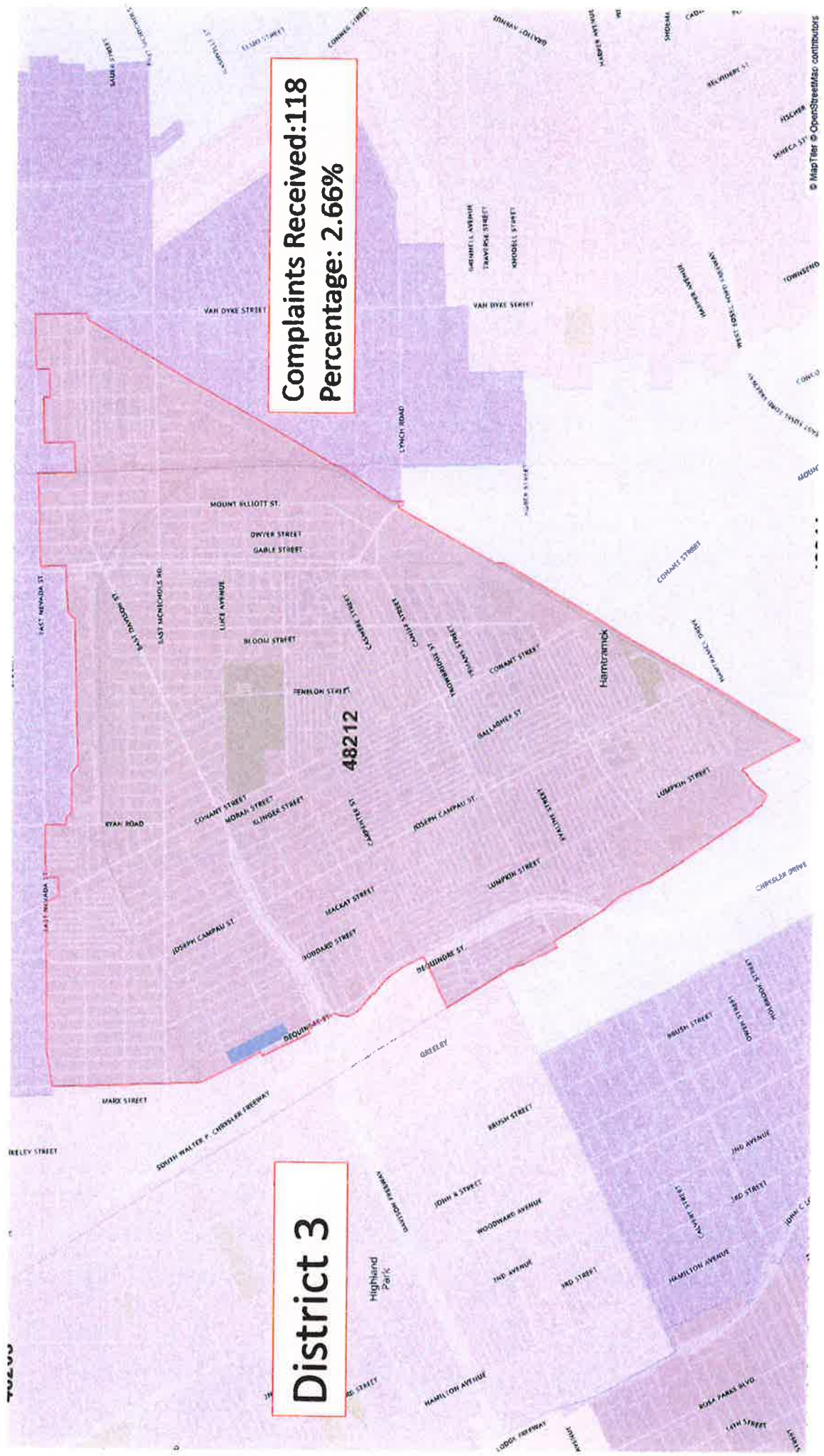


Complaints Received: 25
Percentage: 0.56%

48211

District 5





Complaints Received:118
Percentage: 2.66%

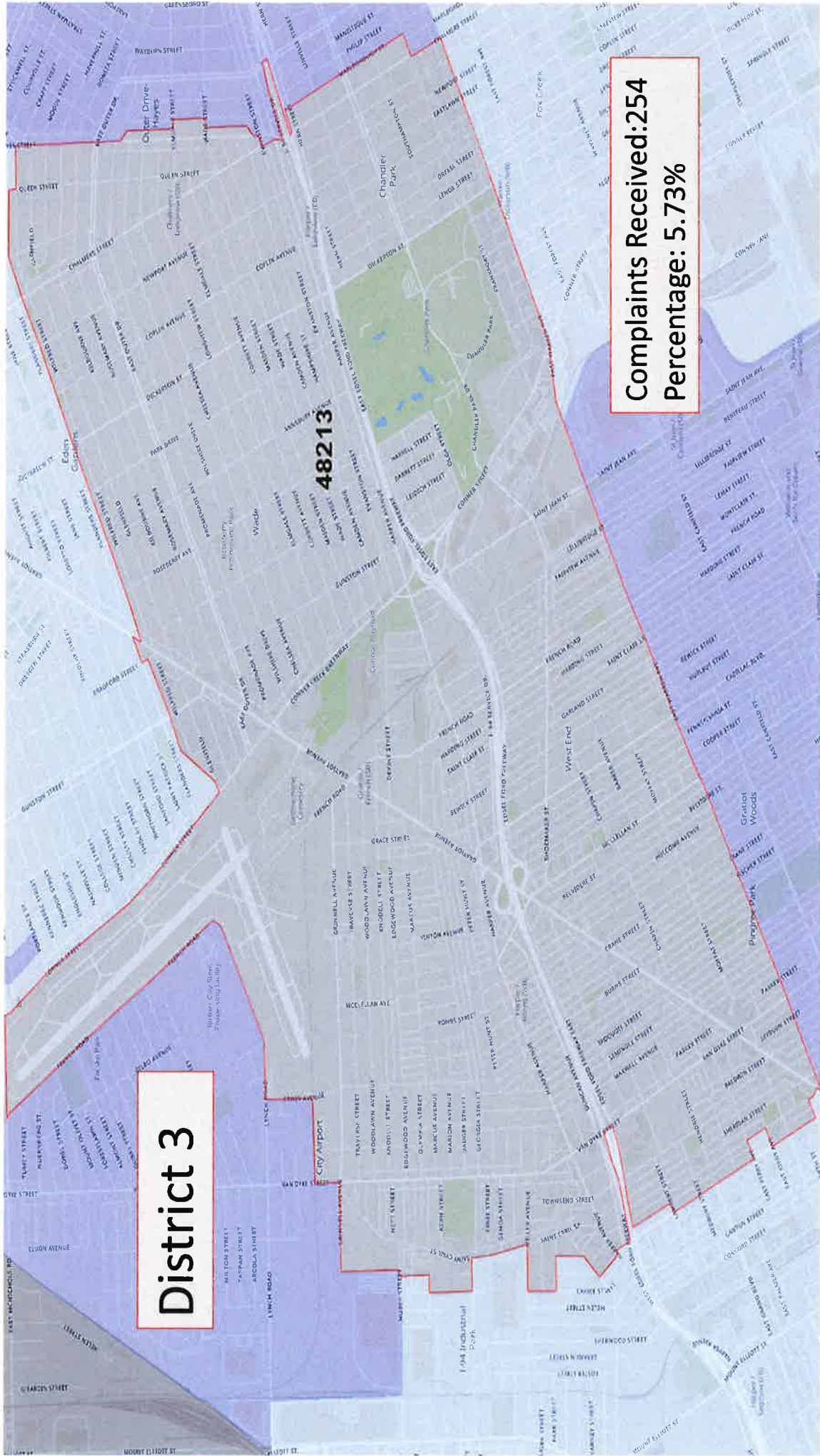
District 3

48212

District 3

48213

Complaints Received: 254
Percentage: 5.73%



Complaints Received: 154
Percentage: 3.47%

48214

District 5

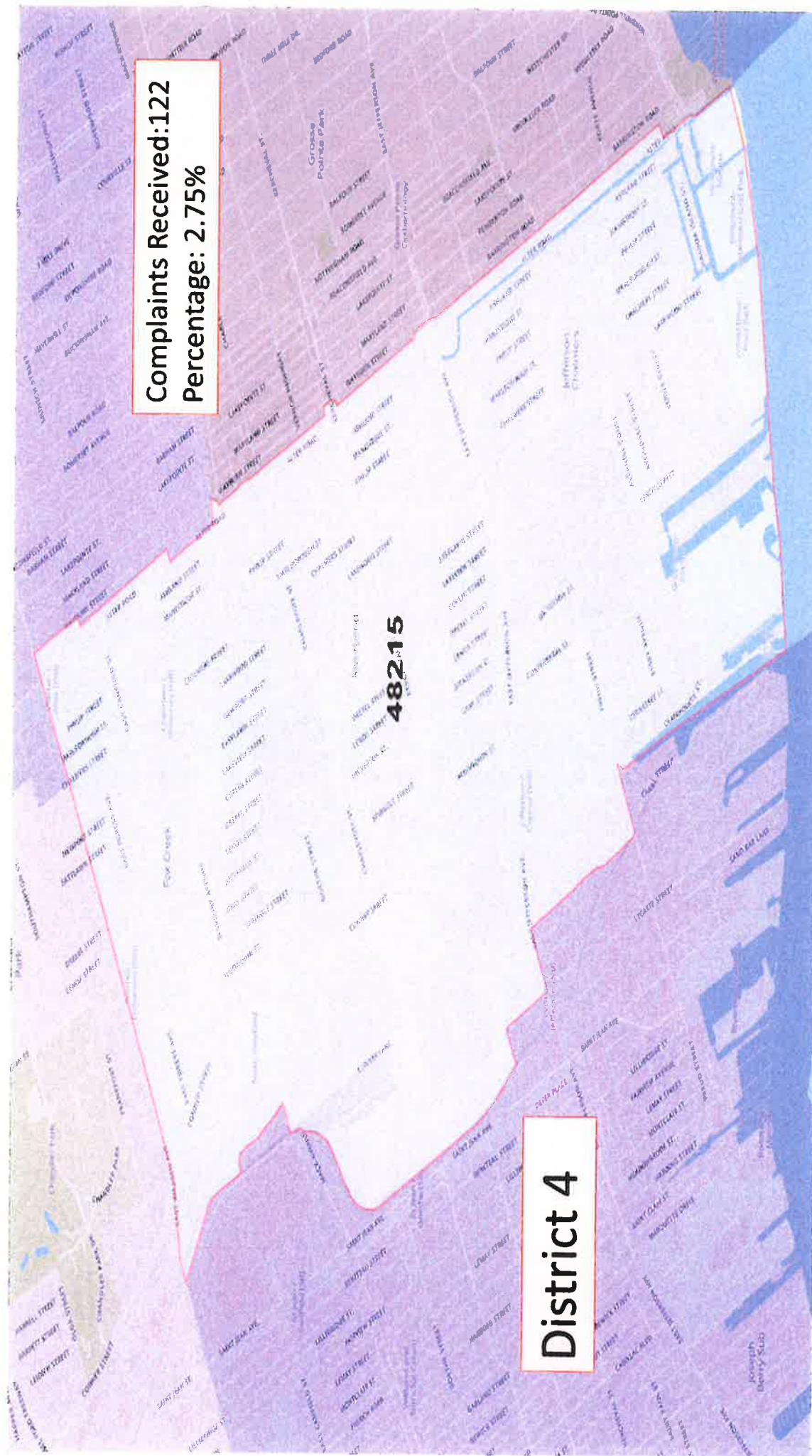
The map displays a grid of streets in District 5, including Saint Jean Ave, Montclair St, French Road, Saint Clair St, Harding Street, Garland Street, Huribut Street, Pennsylvania St, McClellan St, Kohns Street, Crane Street, Burns Street, Indiana Street, Sheridan Street, Helin Street, and others. The area is shaded in light blue, and the surrounding area is in light green. The number 48214 is prominently displayed in the center of the district. The map also shows the location of the Indian Village and the surrounding water bodies.

District 5

Complaints Received:122
Percentage: 2.75%

48215

District 4



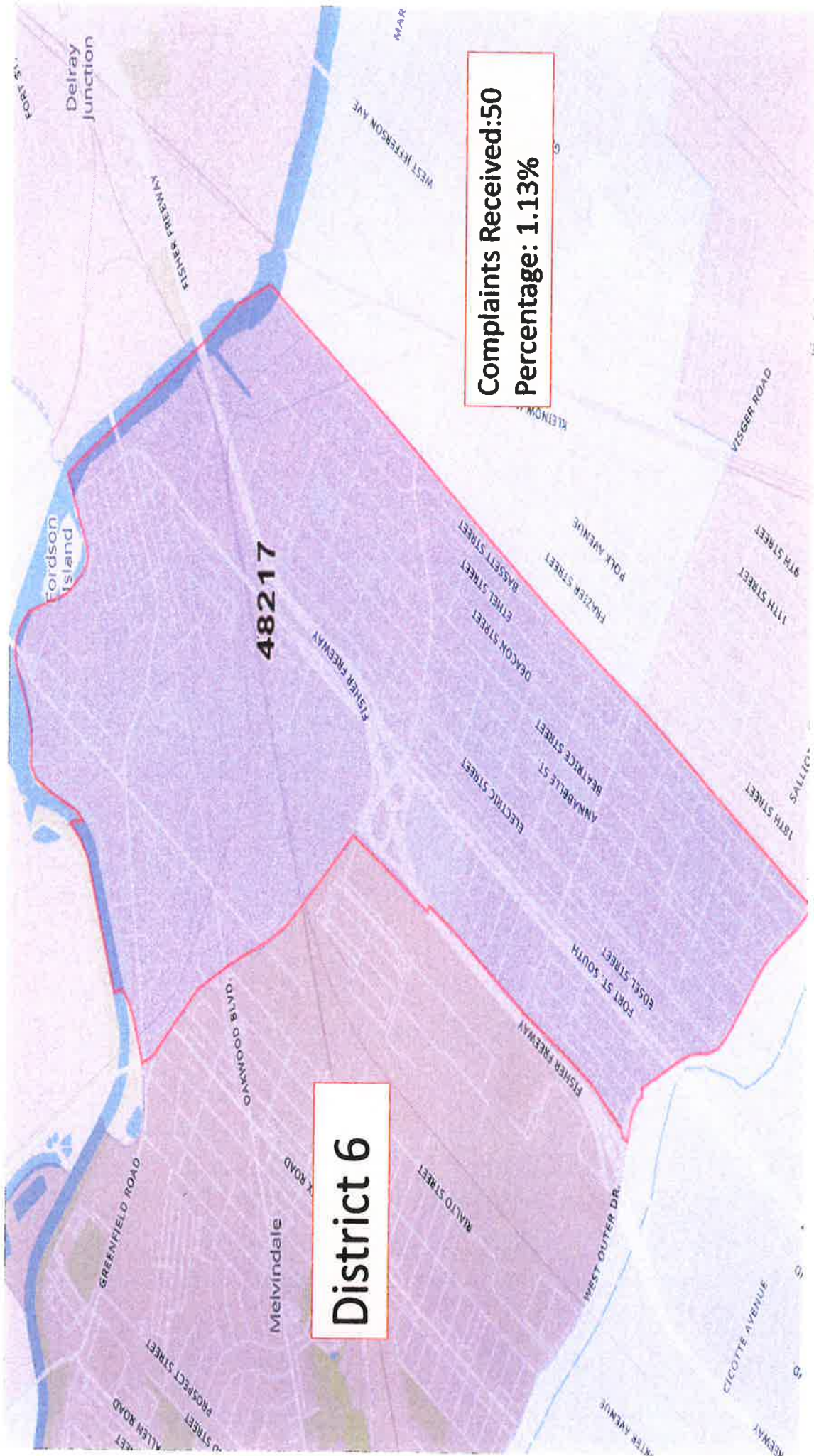


Complaints Received:19
Percentage:0.43 %

District 6

48216

Southwest
Detroit



Complaints Received: 50
Percentage: 1.13%

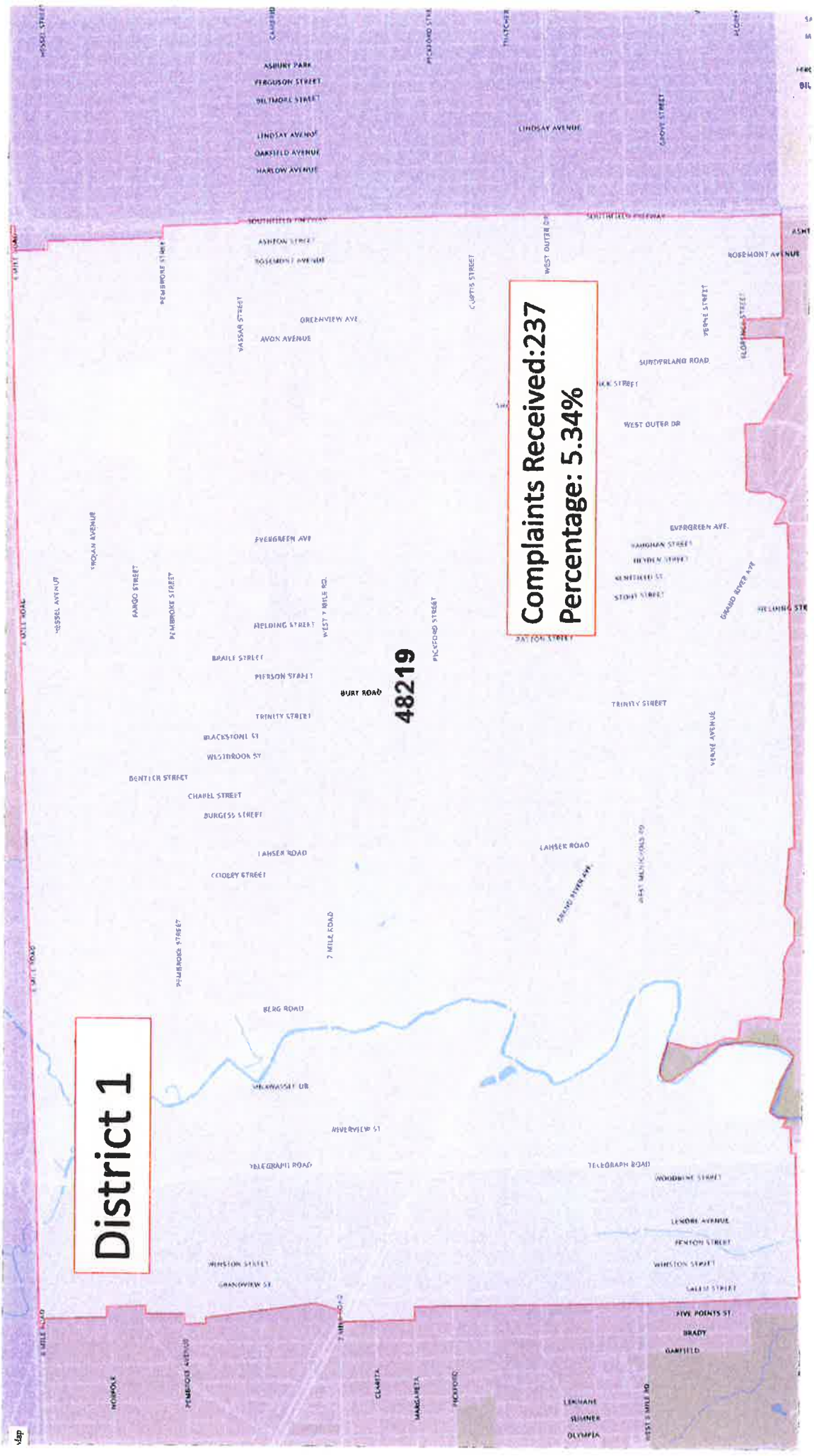
District 6

48217

District 1

Complaints Received: 237
Percentage: 5.34%

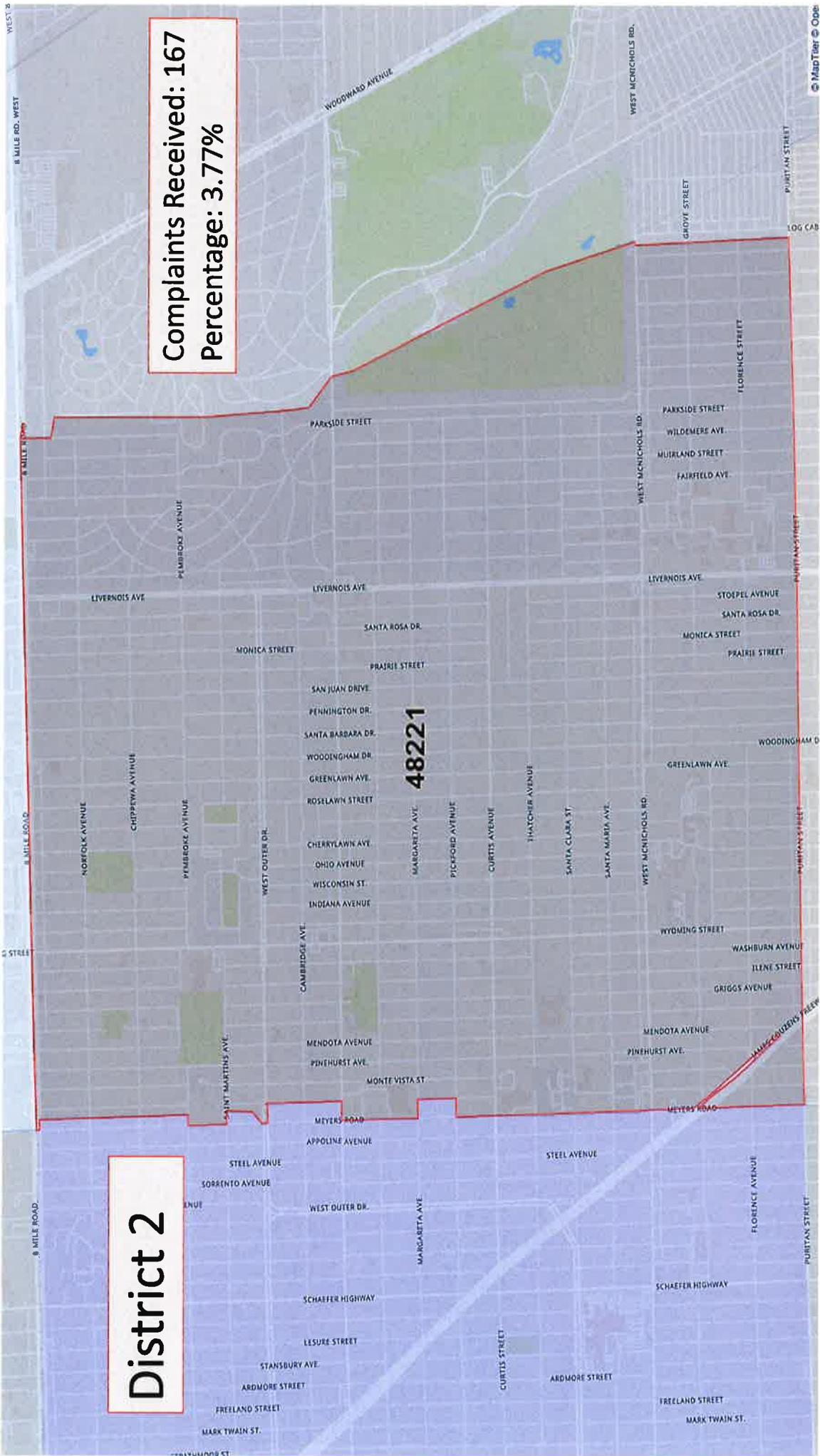
48219



District 2

Complaints Received: 167
Percentage: 3.77%

48221



District 1

48223

Complaints Received: 151
Percentage: 3.40%

The map displays a network of streets within District 1, including major thoroughfares like Southfield Freeway, I-96, and I-75. Numerous local streets are labeled, such as Rutherford St, Mansfield St, Saint Marys St, Murray Hill St, Asbury Park, Ferguson Street, Baltimore Street, Birchcrest St, Lindsay Avenue, Ashton Road, Rosemont Avenue, Penrod Street, Faust Avenue, Greenview Road, Artesian Street, Rock Street, Doyle Ave, Westwood Street, Auburn Street, Evergreen Road, Schoolcraft St, Howard / Jeffries Freeway, Bury Road, Telegraph Road, Woodbine, Womack, Midland, Stilton, Preston, Dore, Lenore Avenue, Benton Street, and Wynton Street. The map also shows the Detroit River and the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel.

Complaints Received: 151
Percentage: 3.40%

48223

District 4

Complaints Received: 191
Percentage: 4.31%

48224

Harper
Woods

Grosse Pointe
Farms

Grosse
Pointe





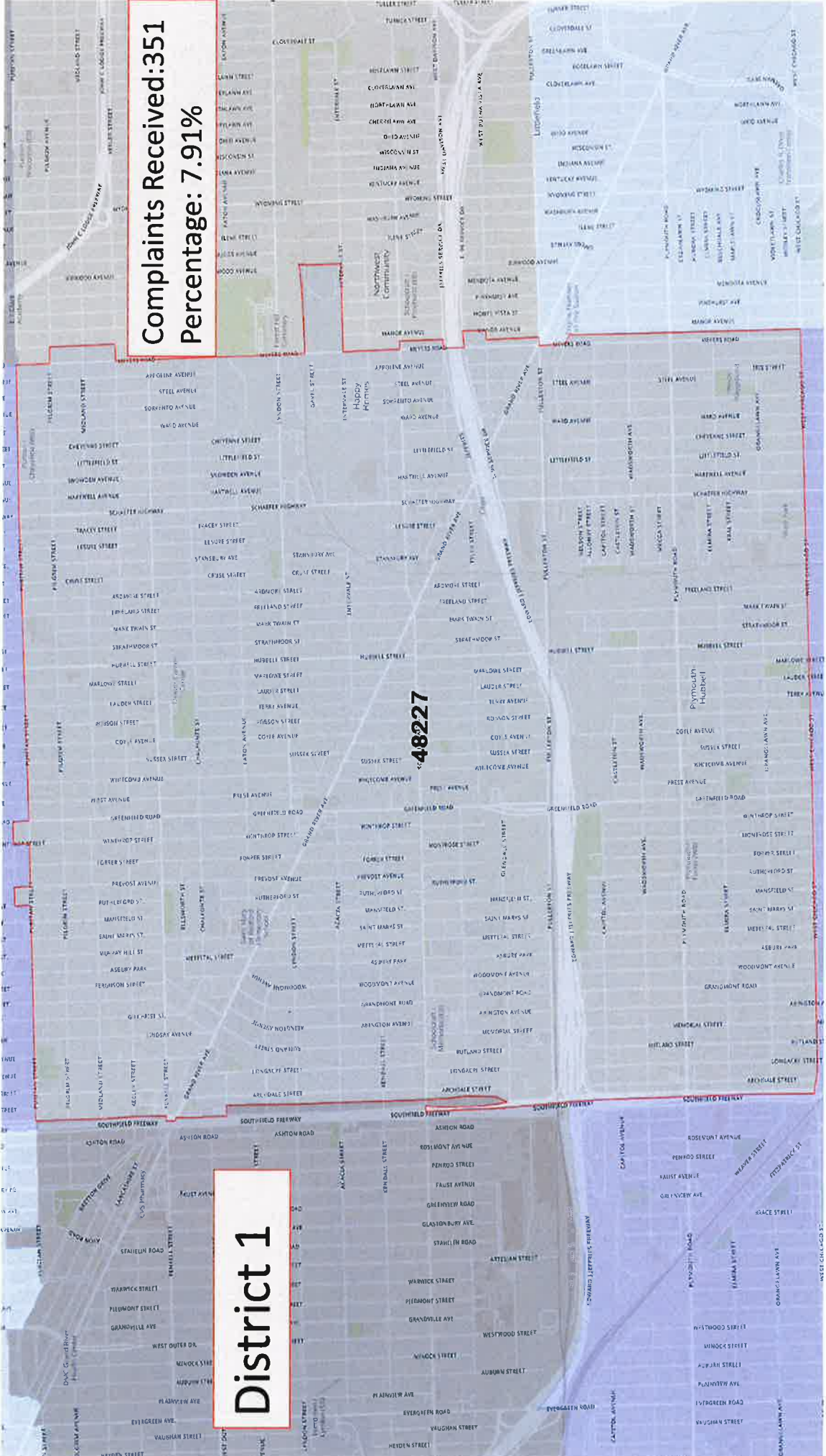
District 6

Complaints Received:91
Percentage: 2.05%

Complaints Received:351
Percentage: 7.91%

48227

District 1

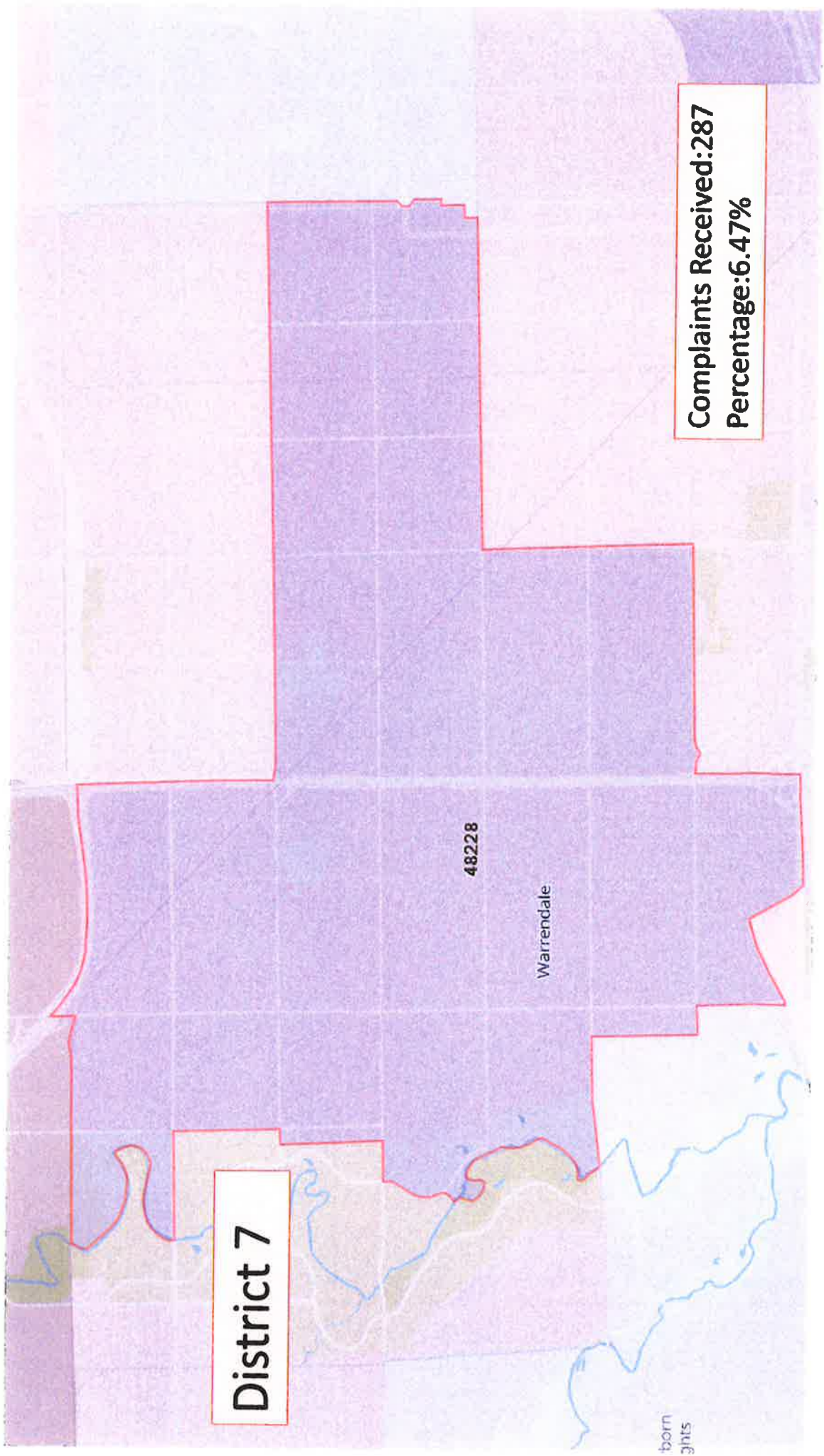


District 7

48228

Warrendale

Complaints Received:287
Percentage:6.47%



Complaints Received: 239
Percentage: 5.39%

District 3

48234

Complaints Received: 200
Percentage: 4.51 %

48235

Northwest
Detroit

District 4

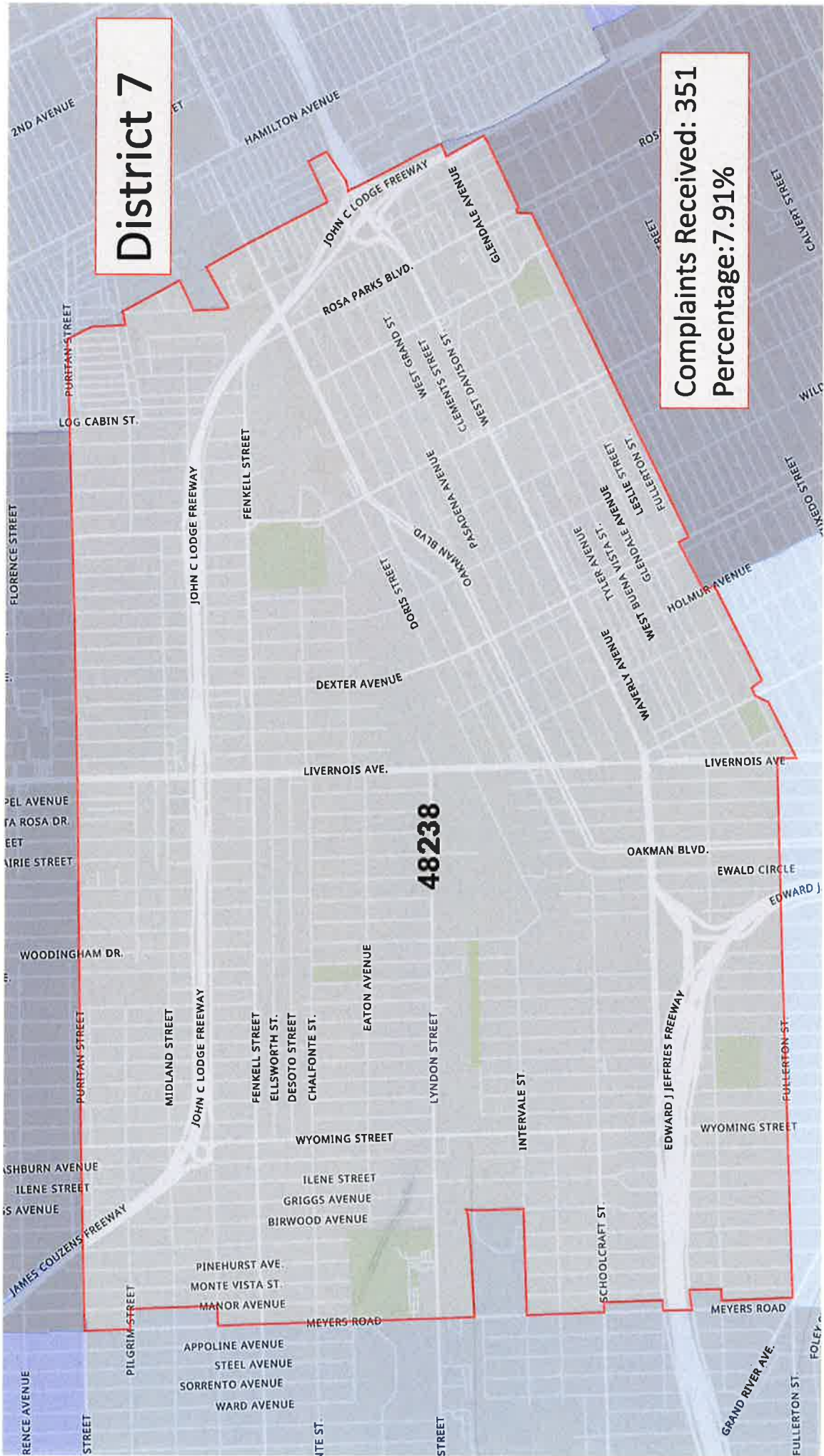
Complaints Received: 10
Percentage: 0.23%



District 7

Complaints Received: 351
Percentage: 7.91%

48238



District 7

Redford
Township

Redford

48239

Beech

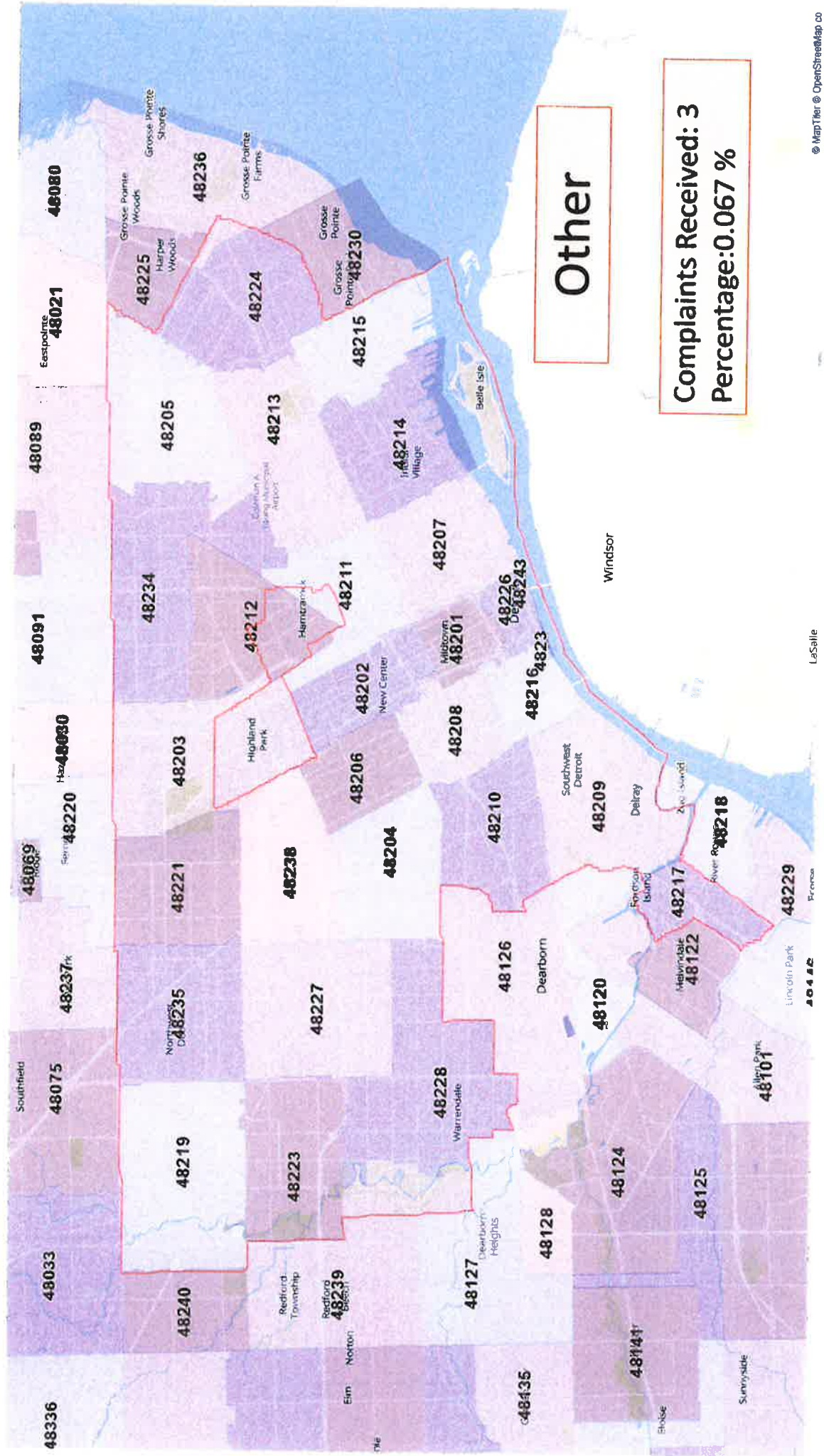
Norton

Elm

Complaints Received: 22
Percentage: 0.50%

Dearborn

Warrend



Other

Complaints Received: 3
Percentage: 0.067 %